

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 5164

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT PINS KS

SUBJECT: UNPUBLICIZED COURT MARTIAL SESSIONS HELD

1. VICE MINISTER OF DEFENSE CHOI KWAN SOO CONFIRMED TO EMBOFF AUGUST 7 THAT COURT MARTIAL PANELS HAD HELD SEVERAL UNPUBLICIZED SESSIONS DURING PAST WEEK TO TEN DAYS WITOUT PUBLICITY. ON TRIAL WERE EIGHT TO TEN SOGANG STUDENTS AND "SOME OTHERS;" CHOI DID NOT KNOW EXACTLY HOW MANY. WHILE SEVERAL QUESTION HAD ANSWER SESSIONS HAD BEEN HELD, CHOI SAID PROSECUTION HAD NOT YET MADE SUMMATION AND SENTENCES NOT YET FIXED.

2. TIP REGARDING TRIALS WHICH PROMPTED EMBOFF QUSTION TO CHOI, CAME FROM NY TIMES MAN FOX BUTTERFIELD WHO INFORMS US HE HAD TRIED TO CHECK STORY WITH GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS FOR SEVERAL DAYS AND UNTIL AUGUST 7 ONLY RECEIVED DENIALS THAT TRIALS BEING CONDUCTED. BUTTERFIELD ORIGINALLY GOT STORY FROM FAMILY MEMBERS WHO HAVE BEEN PERMITTED TO ATTEND SESSIONS. WHEN MINISTRY OF INFORMATION OFFICIALS FINALLY CONFIRMED STORY TO BUTTERFIELD THEY EXPLAINED PREVIOUS DENIALS AS "FAILURE OF COMMUNICATION." IN CONVERSATION WITH EMBOFF, MND VICE MINISTER SAID HE WAS NOT ABLE TO
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PROVIDE REASON FOR COMPLETE ABSENCE PUBLICITY

REGARDING TRIALS.

3. MILITARY INTELLIGENCE HAS UNCONFIRMED REPORTS THAT PANELS 1 AND 3 OF THE EMERGENCY COURT AUGUST 3 BEGAN TRIALS OF 26 STUDENTS FROM FOUR UNIVERSITIES AND ON AUGUST 6 PANELS 1 AND 2 OPENED HEARINGS ON 21 ADDITIONAL STUDENTS. ALL 47 STUDENTS ARE REPORTEDLY BEING CHARGED WITH VIOLATION OF EMERGENCY MEASURE NO. 1.

4. FURTHER INDICATION THAT ROKG IS BEING INCREASINGLY SURREPTITIOUS ABOUT TRIALS IS FACT THAT PRIME MINISTER'S SECRETARY, WHEN ASKED ABOUT THEM, EVINced SURPRISE AND CLAIMED HE WAS COMPLETELY UNINFORMED.
HABIB

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